

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman DeFazio (D-Springfield) announced today that he has secured language in legislation, H.R. 3248, to make \$8 million in Federal funding available to help the Port of Coos Bay purchase the Coos Bay Line from the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP). He also commended the Oregon Transportation Commission for allocating \$4 million in matching funds to purchase and rehabilitate the line.

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DeFazio, Chairman of the House Highways and Transit Subcommittee, originally secured the \$8 million in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU) to help the Port make repairs to a rail bridge on the Coos Bay Line in 2005. However, CORP embargoed the line last September and now plans to abandon it altogether.

“It doesn’t make sense to continue to repair a bridge on a line that is being abandoned, so I made the decision to change the purpose of that \$8 million to help the Port acquire and rehabilitate the line,” DeFazio said.

The Port has made enough repairs to the bridge with funding secured by DeFazio in the 1998 highway bill, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, that the bridge will last another ten years. Combined with the \$4 million in state funding, the Port of Coos Bay will have access to \$12 million to help purchase and rehabilitate the rail line.

“I am pleased that I could work with the Port of Coos Bay, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and local shippers to reallocate this funding,” DeFazio said. “This vital rail line is an imperative component of the South Coast economy.”

H.R. 3248, which contains the language for Coos Bay, is currently under consideration in the Senate. Once the Senate passes it, the bill will be voted on by the House of Representatives, before going to the President for his signature.

Last September, CORP closed the Coos Bay rail line with little more than 24 hours notice. This line provides critical rail access to businesses on the South Coast and is a key transportation link for the Port of Coos Bay. Since the rail closure the average shipper along the Coos Bay Line now pays 10 – 15 percent more in shipping costs because they have to use trucks. The Port of Coos Bay has since filed an application with the Surface Transportation Board in Washington, DC to purchase the Coos Bay Line.